



WRITE 2: Principal Examiner's Report 2022

Overview

It was a great pleasure to be able to resume WRITE 2 after a two-year hiatus, and a privilege to read such a range of responses across the centres.

In general, the best responses have been well planned, and it's not unusual for a response gaining high marks to be one which is the third or maybe even fourth version in the student's booklet. So, I'd recommend crafting and drafting of responses in this paper, as there is a correlation between drafted work and higher marks. All too often, I came across very long responses which showed no evidence of planning or drafting.

Non-fiction was by far the most popular genre for candidates to write in, but did not always garner the most marks. It's quite a safe option, and while candidates were able to gain solid marks, it's hard for students to show playful and inventive language in this genre, unless they have carefully planned and crafted their work. So, in future, I would encourage centres to urge students to be more adventurous in this paper in terms of their choice of genre, but also in their choices of language, if they want to hit the top band.

It was pleasing to see some poetry this year, most of which was well crafted, inventively structured and demonstrated a playful use of language. Poetry which relied too much on heavy end-rhymes and stock images was not as successful. It was clear that students who read a lot (and particularly contemporary) writing usually had a more vibrant, expansive, interesting vocabulary than those who do not, so I'd urge centres to keep reinforcing that message with their students.

All in all, I was pleased with the imaginative quality of the responses.

AO1 - 'Playful and inventive language', and 'sustained use of appropriate forms' are the key phrases to bear in mind here for candidates wishing to reach the highest band. First of all, the response must be sustained and appropriate, meaning that it's got to be consistently hitting the brief all the way through the answer. Moreover, the writing has got to be 'playful and inventive' meaning that the candidate must have attempted to consciously manipulate the language for effect throughout. This year, there could have been more of an emphasis on this across candidate responses.

AO2 - In general there was an alertness to craft, and, indeed, it is only to a certain extent that a piece can be crafted under timed conditions, however responses which were overly long did not help themselves. Technical accuracy in general, across the cohort, was strong, but careless errors do not reflect well on the script, and suggest a lack of attention to detail, and crafting.

Commissions:

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- 1. Say-Do Gap** - This commission provoked a wide range of responses, including poems, fiction and drama, but the most popular genre seen in response to this task was non-fiction. It was clear, though, that across the cohort there seemed to be a strength of feeling and relation to the notion of hypocrisy in today's world. The best responses, some of which were poems, highlighted these contradictions with language that was lively and inventive in a sustained manner throughout.
- 2. Fast Fashion** - Similar to the first commission, there seemed to be an appetite for social commentary across candidate responses this year, and this commission garnered some of the most inventive responses. One highlight included a play which flitted between someone getting ready for a night out, and a worker in a sweatshop making the dress for the partygoer. The best poems in response to this were well developed and had clearly been drafted; less successful poems were short with a limited range of vocabulary.
- 3. Gig** - The best responses to this focused on the gig itself. Less successful answers spent too long describing the moments before they went to the gig (which in some cases was fine but there needed to be a focus on the event itself). Almost all of the responses were non-fiction, with the best of these exhibiting a lively range of devices (e.g. dialogue, narrative voice) and language.
- 4. Mobile Phones/ Wellbeing** - This was among the least popular commissions, but still provoked some strong responses, even if most of the narratives ended with an epiphany of a character in the woods, realising how much more peaceful their life was without a mobile phone. Most of the responses were in prose fiction with a few fairly successful attempts made at drama. The most successful stuck to the brief and explored the damage mobile phones/screen culture can do, before finally contrasting how peaceful life is without them. Least successful responses veered off into the lives of characters and their ennui, which wasn't always helpful or relevant.
- 5. Life on Mars** - The third most popular choice, this response elicited some of the most imaginative responses, and some of the best. One poem was particularly evocative and of publishable standard, evoking a 'lizard king' of Mars, and a rookie journalist who was going to interview him. A common plot involved people fed up on Earth (references made to lying government officials, pandemics, etc.), moving to Mars, only for a dust storm to ensue (this is where the story usually ended). As usual, the best narratives were the ones where the candidate had spent as much time as they could planning and drafting ideas before committing to a final version.

Final Remarks

In an educational environment which seems to champion coverage of content, and direct instruction (rightly or wrongly), it's clear to see from reading this set of responses that the AFA remains a successful alternative.

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WEB

writing courses for and by writers

I'd like to thank centres for making the time to give candidates the opportunity to be creative through this qualification, and for preparing them for this examination. As ever, it's a privilege, and very rewarding, to see such a range of responses under timed conditions.

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